DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 411 690 FL 024 787

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TITLE Resources and Ideas for Working with Gay/Lesbian Themes in the ESL Classroom.
PUB DATE 1997-03-00
NOTE 26p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (31st, Orlando, FL, March 11-15, 1997).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; Class Activities; Classroom Techniques; *Controversial Issues (Course Content); Course Content; *English (Second Language); Films; Health Promotion; *Homophobia; *Homosexuality; Information Sources; Instructional Materials; Second Language Instruction; *Self Concept; Sexuality; Stereotypes; Suicide

ABSTRACT

It is proposed that in an effort to promote awareness, positive self-concept, and healthy attitudes, and to reduce stereotyping, sexual identity issues should be incorporated into English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching. Open discussion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual issues may help to reduce the isolation of lesbians and gays, demystify their situation, and change the attitudes of others toward them, and not coincidentally, reduce the suicide rate among this significant minority. A thematic approach is recommended alongside the communicative approach to language teaching. Activities that could be incorporated into this framework are described, including conversational activities (word association, discussion of students' points of view, role-playing, discussion of radio and television programs on the topic, and conversations with gays and lesbians), relevant readings (list included) as a basis for class activities (conversation, vocabulary development, writing, grammar review) and reading practice, films on homosexuality and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and writing exercises. Contains 16 references. (MSE)

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RESOURCES AND IDEAS FOR WORKING WITH GAY/LESBIAN THEMES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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Resources and Ideas for Working with Gay/Lesbian Themes in the ESL Classroom

Two concerns have led to my decision to write this article. One is education and the other is health. I believe it is the duty of those of us who are lesbian, gay, and straight teaching professionals to educate our learners about the true nature of homosexuality. False myths and stereotypes and vicious prejudices abound among anyone raised in our homophobic culture. When I write of our responsibility, I am not advocating that, if you are lesbian or gay, you all come out to your classes. That is a very delicate issue which requires a great deal of personal soul searching. Some of us can and others can't. But this doesn't mean that gay and straight teachers alike can't bring up gay/lesbian or bisexual issues in their classes. Gay teachers can always play the pronoun game; use "they" instead of "we." That's what I did when I broached the topic. I felt a little hypocritical, but...I imagine that in any case, as soon as I mentioned the topic, most of my students assumed I too was gay. So I guess this is a form of indirect disclosure.

The following quote by Robert Goss (1994) painfully reveals the need for change in our education system's approach to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual people:

> Our educational system presumes heterosexual children and does not allow for differences of sexual identities. Gay and lesbian children grow up in an educational system designed on rigid gender differences and oriented toward heterosexual social identities. Compulsive heterosexuality

> is embedded in the social and educational system within which they are socialized. Within a nonpluralistic and frequently intolerant system of socialization, they struggle to develop healthy self-images. This compulsive heterosexual environment has led to severe isolation, alienation, and depression of gay and lesbian youth. (p. 16)

Goss goes on to write of the silence and isolation of gay youth who do not feel the confidence to share their orientation with others. He comments on the frequently hostile environment of intolerance, misinformation, and hatred created by peers, teachers and others in the educational system. Our educational system is a product of heterosexual society and works against the development of healthy gay and lesbian identities. More often than not, attempts at introducing a more positive lesbian/gay sex education are actively opposed by religious and civic groups.

The most salient point found in the above quotation is that the bottom line is self image. From day one gay/lesbian youth learn from their culture that they are sinners, perverts, degenerates, aberrations of nature, fairies, queers, dykes, fags. This explains why the highest rate of teenage suicides is among lesbian/gay youth (Gibson, 1986). Introducing gay/lesbian themes into educational contexts is more than just a nice idea; it can be a matter of life or death. As I shall emphasize further on, the young people that survive are often plagued by serious emotional disorders resulting from the hatred directed at them

from every corner of society.

Lesbian/gay youth often suffer from a sense of isolation, a sense of being alone in their condition. Little do they realize that as many as 10% of their classmates are also gay or lesbian, that there are literally tens of millions of gay and lesbian men and women throughout the world. Learning that you are not alone can go a long way in creating a sense of security, a sense of comradeship, a sense of belonging. Being gay is far more bearable when you know you're not the only one.

The need to hide one's true identity from the world leads to invisibility. As we well know, the majority of lesbians and gays live their lives behind masks. They seldom show their true faces to anyone but other lesbians or gays. Gays and lesbians lead a double life. Most of the time they conform to the expectations of a heterosexual world. Only in the safe company of other gay/lesbians do they let their true selves be known. Such constant masquerading and self denial are hardly supportive of a positive self image.

It would seem that a sensitive awareness of what lesbian/gay youth face as they try to define themselves and the open discussion of their issues in educational contexts could be enormously beneficial to young people who are wrestling with them in isolation and fear as well as for changing attitudes among the non-gay/lesbian members of a class. Often these latter students' understanding of gay/lesbianism is plagued by misinformation, false stereotypes and whispered innuendo. The purpose of this

article is to suggest ways of working with both of these populations through thematic teaching/learning. We must face the fact as educators that up to 10% of our students are gay and lesbian, and most of them are suffering. Some positive mention of lesbians and gays, materials which portray same sex couples, frank discussion of the challenges of being gay and of the particular dangers of AIDS for gays and other young people could open new worlds for these learners. For the first time in their lives the taboo may be broken. They can face themselves for what they are and realize that being it is not so bad after all. Such discussions would also be highly informative and enlightening to the non-gay members of the class.

I have no empirical data to support what I will now say. It is only anecdotal and intuitive. The population many of us work with, students from countries other than the United States, are perhaps even more needy of support and information than students from the U.S. Often they come from societies where homosexuality is an absolute taboo. They are tremendously conflicted as they try to fit their homosexuality into a healthy self identity. The information and attitudes we present in our ESL classes could have profound salutary effects on these international students.

Lesbian and gays and the population in general need to demystify the condition. Popular folklore about gay/lesbianism is distorted, biased and untrue. Educators in general, and the TESOL profession in particular, have a responsibility to assure that the truth gets out. Misconceptions and discrimination are

doing untold harm to young gay/lesbians and leaving non-gay/lesbian youth with distorted understandings of the condition. For these reasons, I propose the activities I will soon mention for use in ESL classrooms to help lesbian/gay youth come to grips with who they are and to present a more accurate portrayal of gay/lesbianism to non-gay learners.

Saying the Word

When I finally mentioned the words "gay" and "lesbian" in my classes for the first time in 29 years as a teacher, I was a bit apprehensive to say the least. A group of colleagues and I were working with the theme "Problems, Solutions, and Consequences." I decided to work with the problem of the high rate of suicide among lesbian/gay/bisexual youth. If you are a member of TESOL's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual and Friends Caucus, you might have read an article I wrote describing this experience in last summer's issue of *Out and About*. In spite of my initial trepidation, it turned out to be a positive experience for all. I felt more like an educator than I had in years.

The Search for Self-Acceptance and Health

This leads to my second concern--health. I refer to the health of our lesbigay learners and our own health as lesbigay educators. The literature usually asserts that lesbigay youth are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Yet in the November 17th, 1996 issue of the

Advocate, there was an article which reports on research done by Christopher Bagley and Pierre Tremblay of the University of Calgary. They made the astounding finding that in a survey they conducted, lesbigay youth were nearly 14 times more at risk than their heterosexual contemporaries of making a serious attempt on their own lives. To read this was chilling to say the least. In any case, suicide is the leading cause of death among lesbigay adolescents. Clearly, the gay community's young people are tremendously at risk. Suicide is of course the ultimate in self-destructive behavior, but our young people are plagued by many less severe manifestations caused by internalized homophobia or external homophobia, plain and simple. They suffer from rejection by family and friends, institutional homophobia, gay bashing, emotional disorders, antisocial behavior, and underachievement or abandonment in the school setting.

Most lesbians, gays, bi-, and transexuals remember what it was like to realize at the age of 7 or 8 that we were somehow different. We felt like outsiders. We were also aware from the start that this difference was bad and that we had to hide it from the world. Later we put a name on it, usually a pejorative one like fag or dyke. How do I accept that I am this abomination of nature? Who or what am I? Maybe our only role model was a local creep who drove around picking up and feeling up young boys. Is this me? What sin did I commit to deserve this? I can't possibly continue in the religion in which I was raised--it damns me to hell. One can easily understand the psychic turmoil

all this puts young people through, particularly when they have no access to accurate information about their condition and feel that they are the only such freak on earth. Our heterosexist society tries to dehumanizes us. As Mitch Walker has said, "we're never persons to begin with, we're about nothing but twisted and illegal acts." Of course these young people suffer from mental disorders and suicidal urges. Not every one develops as I have described, although I certainly did.

You can imagine how reassuring it might be to a lesbigay youth if one day in class a respected teacher talks about homosexuality as if it were perfectly normal. You can image how empowering it might be to learn some real facts about your condition and to discover that there are all kinds of people out there who are just like you. A little information can go a long way in changing self-perceptions. This is healthy and necessary for our youth.

Those of us homosexuals who make it to adulthood more or less unscathed usually come to terms with our condition. Maybe, as in my case, it takes five years of psychoanalysis to finally be able to accept one's self as a gay man or a lesbian woman or as a bisexual or transsexual. Maybe simply discovering a group of friends who shares your condition, either at school or in a local gay bar, helps you to readjust your image of yourself. Some of us as adults are by dent of life experience quite cynical, but I suspect that the majority of us are just average people faced with the challenge of being members of the world's

most despised minority group. Almost nothing!

As adults lesbigays hopefully learn to come out of the closet a little more each day. This is an extremely healthy, transforming process. Suddenly a life of lies and deceptions is struck down by **TRUTH**, written in bold, capital letters. I found this to be incredibly liberating. Slowly we are able to mention the word gay in a widening circle of contexts. One of these is our professional life. It is healthy to conquer new areas in which we can utter the forbidden "g," "l," and "b" words. As threatening as this may seem at first, many people's ho-hum responses make you wonder what all the fuss was about. These words probably strike greater terror in our hearts than in those of many of our heterosexual friends or family members. Yet there are always those who are horrified and repulsed. Still, it is healthy for us to spread our gay/lesbian or bisexual consciousness and presence into all the domains of our lives. And damn the ~~homo~~hetero sexists who want to stop us and make us invisible. I can't urge you strongly enough, whether gay or straight, to *not* be afraid to mention the words "gay ," "lesbian," or "bisexual" in your classes. The rewards may surprise you. This is healthy and necessary for us all as well.

Three Crucial Messages to be Taught

My purpose in writing this, however, is not to preach, but rather to teach--to suggest a few things you might want to try in your classes which will bring needed information to all your

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students. I have identified at least three basic messages which should be part of our teaching. First, homosexuality is natural and normal. It is just one of many possible human conditions. Very few transgendered people actually choose to be gay or lesbian or bisexual or transsexual; we just grow up and discover we are. There is mounting scientific evidence that homosexuality has a biological base related to genetic or hormonal changes--it's probably out of our hands. Who, in any case, would purposefully choose to lead a life fraught with the prejudice, discrimination, and hate which typify the life experiences of many lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and particularly transsexuals?

Secondly, we are not an insignificant minority; we are everywhere. It is estimated that 10% or more of the human population is homosexual. This means there are as many of us as there are African Americans in the U.S. We are by no means an irrelevant minority which can be ignored because of its numerical insignificance. Furthermore, we are a valuable minority which has made untold contributions to our civilization. Our contribution has been even greater than our numbers. We have a heritage we can be proud of. As Andrew Ramer has said, "If all of us decided to stay home for a week the entire cultural life of the planet would grind to a complete halt." As gays, we have the capacity *to do*, be it in the realms of theater, art, music, writing, teaching or any other area of human productivity.

Finally, learners must come to realize that the problem is not homosexuality. The factor which causes so much distress and

unhappiness is societal homophobia. When I discussed adolescent suicide with my students I began by putting the words "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual" on the board. I then asked my classes for one word or short phrase associations which immediately came to their minds when they saw these words. After we had a list of 15 or so, I asked them to classify them as positive, neutral, or negative. As you can well imagine, the large majority were negative, a few were neutral, and none were positive. I use these results to explain the meaning of homophobia. I suggest that the results or our little survey indicate that the class is homophobic. The problem is not homosexuality, something no one can control, but rather homophobia--they themselves. They can and should control their attitudes and change them.

I believe it is very important to get the above messages across. Fortunately, more and more resources and ideas are becoming available for use in the classroom. A recent trend in ESL teaching has been toward more communicative approaches. Such approaches give the learner the opportunity to actually use the language in authentic and meaningful contexts. A technique which is now being widely used is the exploration of themes. That is, lessons are arranged in units around a central theme. The thematic unit may last a week or two or a whole semester. All English learning activities are related to the theme: reading, writing, listening, speaking, vocabulary building, and grammar exercises. An advantage of using themes is that it gives learners the opportunity to master the theme-related vocabulary

and use it actively in a variety of activities. It also allows students to penetrate deeply into a conceptual area about which they develop increasing knowledge and perspectives. Themes, when well chosen, are also more interesting for students than most textbooks. Learners tend to become actively involved in their exploration and exploitation. They have a content area about which they really want to communicate. I should point out that themes can be any topic from real life, but in this article I am focusing on gay/lesbianism in an attempt to meet TESOL's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual & Friends Caucus's goals of increasing understanding of the condition and finding ways to incorporate gay/lesbian material into the ESL curriculum.

Working with themes gives the teacher a great deal of control, more so than when, for example, locked into the predetermined curriculum of a textbook. The teacher has choice over the theme, the amount of time to be spent exploring it, the level of difficulty, the number and types of readings, the amount and kinds of writing, the topics for discussion and the listening selections to be used. The teacher can tailor the content and scope of the thematic unit to any ESL/EFL setting.

Rather than making language a simple object of study, we try to make it a vehicle of active and creative communication. When one develops language ability naturalistically, all language skills develop simultaneously. The thematic approach fosters such holistic development. Work is done collaboratively by students and many opportunities arise to work with critical

thinking.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Teachers

A rather large percent of language teachers are gay, lesbian, or bisexual themselves. If they feel free to share their life experiences, these could perhaps be integrated into the exploration of lesbian/gay themes. Perhaps these lesbian/gay teachers could develop a mentor relationship with some of the gay/lesbian students in their classes. A big brother or big sister would be invaluable to lesbian/gay youth. Gay/lesbian teachers could also be asked to collaborate with straight teachers who dare to broach this theme. They could offer invaluable insights and true life experiences.

How many lesbian/gay teachers are there? Statistics about the number of gay/lesbian teaching professionals do not appear to be available, although the usual figure for the general public is 10%. A few brief mentions of the number of lesbian/gay teachers are made in the literature. For example, Klinger (1994) states that "a large number of lesbians, gays and bisexuals...continue to choose to build our futures in the academia" p. 186. Wong (1995) affirms

> that our schools are filled with homosexual adults. Some are teachers or paraprofessionals; others coach teams, clean floors, run libraries. Some are in charge of the whole school, or even the district. Some are the targets of rumors, some no one would suspect. A few are open about who they are. (p.22)

Pollack maintains that "the nation's classrooms are staffed with more lesbian and gay teachers than any school board or

superintendent imagines" (p. 131). According to Stoller (1994), 46.4% of the faculty at Kresge College of the University of California at Santa Cruz is lesbian or gay. Finally, Wong (1995) asserts that "it is doubtful there is any school in the entire nation that does not have at least one homosexual member" (p. 133) and that "most lesbian and gay teachers never come out of the closet" (p. 22). which is why even an educated estimate of numbers is not possible.

How can lesbian/gay issues be handled in the ESL classroom? In what follows, I will suggest activities which could be incorporated into a thematic unit covering this subject area. Of course, no one can use everything suggested. But you can pick and choose and create a unit of the length you desire.

Conversational Activities

Let's first look at some activities for conversation and discussion. You could do the activity I've already suggested of writing the words "gay/lesbian/bisexual" on the board and then asking students for their associations with these words. These would be listed on the board. Next students would be asked to classify their associations as negative, positive, or neutral with respect to gayness. Finally students would be asked to discuss and explain the associations they offered. This could be an effective way of exploring students' existing attitudes toward lesbians and gays.

Another discussion activity would be to suggest to students that gayness can be seen as a moral, medical, or social problem

or as no problem at all. As students engage in the suggested discussion activity, they could choose the point of view they most support and present their arguments. Those who have arrived at an objective and unbiased view of gay/lesbianism usually reject the notions that being gay represents either a moral, medical or social problem. Therefore, the teacher will have to be well documented to be able to explain arguments which do not support these points of view. Hopefully, after discussing and debating, the class will come to the conclusion that gayness is no problem at all. This goal, however, may not always be universally achievable. The ESL classroom is only one small part of our learners' lives. They bring to it a whole series of beliefs, attitudes, family values, religious views, stereotypes and intolerances which may be difficult to change in only a few hours of classwork. But it's at least important to get them thinking about these issues, even if we don't change them over night.

An additional conversational activity would be to have students role play being gay. Conversations could be planned in which an interviewer inquires about the subjects' gayness and life as a lesbian woman or a gay man. If any students in the class have identified themselves as being gay, they could listen to the conversations and comment on their accuracy. If no students are available, a volunteer from a local gay organization could be asked to perform this same function. This again can reveal stubborn stereotypes.

Radio or TV programs dealing with gay/lesbianism could be taped and used as listening exercises. A good resource for his would be the Lesbian and Gay newsmagazine series on National Public Television. These can be used for vocabulary and comprehension development as well as a stimulant for conversation activities. At my university we choose important vocabulary items and then have students listen to tapes which define the words and use them in contextualized example sentences. Students then listen to the recorded selection and are given comprehension questions about the content. Finally, they complete a close instrument summarizing the listening selection and reviewing the vocabulary items that have been presented.

An important part of the unit would be to give the class the opportunity to meet and converse with lesbian/gay people. Members of gay organizations could be invited to the class to discuss their perceptions of being gay and to answer students' questions. This activity could last a day or two. It will allow students to know a gay person first hand and to discover that they are not "strange," "perverse," or "threatening."

Reading Resources

Lesbian/gay literature has been blossoming incredibly in recent years. There are any number of fiction or non-fiction texts from which readings could be taken and used in our unit on gayness. I like to use short, gripping excerpts as a stimulus for conversation, vocabulary building, writing, grammar review,

as well as just reading practice.

Among the fiction books this writer has read, Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* series is a gold mine of quotable reading selections. I found Felice Picanos *Like People in History* and *Ambidextrous* and David Feinberg's *Spontaneous Combustion* to be brilliant and provocative. Other useful fiction works would be Reid's (1986) *The Best Little Boy in the World* and Hollerman's (1977) *The Dancer from the Dance*. Also very valuable would be *The Gay & Lesbian Literary Companion* edited by Malinowski and Brelin (1995) and a collection edited by B. L. Singer (1993) titled *Growing Up Gay: A Literary Anthology*. With respect to literature for adolescents, the American Library Association (1990) has published a useful and comprehensive list of suggested novels.

As for non-fiction, Dennis Altman's (1971) *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* is an important resource. The introductory chapter, "Coming Out: The Search for Identity," and the following chapter, "Discovering the Gayworld," are accurate and moving reflections on being gay in today's world. Although somewhat difficult reading for intermediate or even advanced students, C.A. Tripp's (1975) *The Homosexual Matrix* presents a valuable chapter on "The Origins of Homosexuality." Robert Goss's (1994) *Jesus Acted Up* also has very usable introductory sections. *Gay New York* (Chauncey, 1994) presents the history of gays from the late 19th century through the 1940's. The introduction includes an interesting discussion of how the word

gay came to be used to denote male homosexuals. Another valuable resource is Kirk and Madsen's (1990) *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s*. It offers an illuminating critique of the gay lifestyle. These are but a few suggestions among the many valuable readings which you can find in your local gay/lesbian bookstore. A very comprehensive and valuable lesbian/gay reading list has been compiled by TESOL's Jack Darcy and Chuck Jones (1994) and I strongly recommend it to anyone working with the issue.

International learners might find it of interest to read English translations of gay/lesbian literature produced in other cultures. For example, they could deal with excerpts from Hispanic authors Gaspar de Alba's *Three Times a Woman*, Manuel Puig's *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, or Reinaldo Arenas' *The Assault* or *Before Night Falls*. There are also the writings of Andre Gide such as *Corydon* which is a classic originally written in French. In the prolific work of the Japanese author Yukio Mishima there are several novels dealing with lesbian/gay themes such as *Confessions of a Mask* or *Run Away Horses*. Various useful anthologies are also available. Some suggestions would be *Gay Plays: An International Anthology* edited by J.M Besset et al or *Coming Out: An Anthology of International Gay/Lesbian Writing* edited by S. Likosky. Edmund White has edited a volume, the *Faver Book of Gay Short Stories*, which features the writings of authors from English-speaking countries in addition to the U.S. The above are only a few of the numerous examples of

international fiction we could cite. Once more, I refer you to your local gay/lesbian bookstores. Finally, I might mention an important collection of non-fiction articles edited by Henricks, et al (1993), *The Third Pink Book*, which deals with lesbian/gay issues in diverse countries around the world.

When I work with readings I often use the entire program or elements of the Authentic Texts approach developed by Singleton, Devitt, and Small of Trinity College, Dublin. As I say you can go through all the steps or just use elements of the approach. The whole approach can be quite time consuming. Let me enumerate the steps involved.

1) Give your students a list of at most 30 important vocabulary items from the text. They should work in groups of four or five.

2) Have them discover these words' meanings by asking each other, using their dictionaries, or asking the teacher.

3) Project a chart on the board which consists of interlocking circles labeled person, event, object, place, and time. Ask students to copy this on a large piece of cardboard.

4) Give students Post-Its which have been cut in half. They copy the words on each slip and then classify them into the appropriate circle on the chart. This gives them the rudimentary blocking out of potential sentences.

4) Ask them to use the words in a story or composition of their own creation. These can be shared aloud with the

class.

5) Next, write a simplified summary of the story or article. Write one sentence per line. Make as many copies as you have groups. Cut the story into strips, put them in envelopes, and hand them out at the beginning of a class period.

6) Have your students organize these in some logical order.

7) These versions are also shared with the class and the groups explain the organizational principles they followed.

8) Using this rendering of the text, give your class the opportunity to edit or rewrite their first version.

9) Finally, give them the text to read in class or at home. They should be well prepared in terms of vocabulary and ideas to understand it easily. That is, this technique builds schemata which facilitate the interpretation of an authentic, unadulterated text.

10) As a last step, you can discuss and analyze the text. You can create conversational or writing exercises and grammar practice on the basis of the text's content.

As I said, doing all this can be time consuming. It can be abbreviated by only presenting the vocabulary or the strip story and having them do less writing. Students always enjoy this approach and seem to benefit from it. It is a valuable technique because students are asked to analyze and work at the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels.

Video Resources

Video is another important resource. Among the titles which are readily available in most video stores, *Philadelphia*, *Longtime Companion*, *Roommates*, *The Sum of Us*, *The Wedding Banquet*, and *Torchsong Trilogy* would all make for provocative viewing. The first three deal directly with AIDS as well as providing sympathetic and authentic portrayals of gay lifestyle. All of these will provoke a great deal of discussion and reflection and topics for writing.

Writing Activities

As for writing practice, short research papers can be assigned in which students explore different aspects of the gay/lesbian condition. Students could be asked to write about how their lives would have been different if they had grown up gay in our contemporary world. Or students could be asked to put themselves in a gay or lesbians shoes and to write about a typical day in a lesbian/gay's life. They could base these accounts on interviews they have held with gay or lesbian friends or visitors. The greatest lesson they might learn from this is the ordinariness of the lives led by most gays and lesbians. They will see that being gay or lesbian is but one small part of these individuals' complex and rich personalities. Writing topics are boundless.

Gay Liberation through Education

If we can get past our society's prejudices and its strictures against gay/lesbianism as being sinful and perverse, we will soon learn that gays and lesbians, while to a certain extent culturally different, are basically like anyone else. Their only point of difference is their same-sex sexual orientation. During large segments of Judeo-Christian history, such an orientation has been spurned by the church and laity alike. This was due to ignorance, fear and prejudice against difference. At times gay/lesbianism was treated as a moral problem; at times it was treated as a medical problem, but it was always treated with disdain. This societal hate which came at us from all directions led to strange and neurotic behavior on the part of many gays and lesbians.

After many years of invisibility, prejudice and despair, gay men and lesbian women, and bi- and transsexuals are at last demanding to be treated as the normal human beings they are. They are demanding equal rights and treatment and an end to harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. In spite of their demands, many of these behaviors still persist among the non-gay/lesbian public. The road to self-acceptance is still rocky for lesbian/gay youth. They need all the support, orientation, and affection they can get. Our schools should play an active role in providing this. The ESL/EFL profession has always shown brightly for its tolerance of human diversity and its humane treatment of those who are different from the standard average

American norm. As well as working to objectively inform and modify the attitudes of non-lesbian/gay students, ESL/EFL teachers should take the lead in offering an unprejudiced and compassionate approach to the education and orientation of the gay/lesbian youths who fill at least one tenth of the seats in our classrooms.

I would like to end with a quote from Andrew Sullivan's *Virtually Normal*. I believe it is our voice, the voice of every lesbian, gay, transsexual, or bisexual, irrespective of who we are or where we are from:

"We *are* your military and have fought your wars and protected your homes. We *are* your businessmen and -women, who built and sustained this economy for homosexual and heterosexual alike. We *are* your teachers; we have built your universities and trained your scholars. We have created your art and designed and built your buildings. We *are* your civic leaders, your priests and rabbis, your writers and inventors, your sports idols and entrepreneurs. We need nothing from you.... Protect us from nothing; but treat us as you would any heterosexual" (pp. 176-177).

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